
AP[®] United States History

Sample Student Responses and Scoring Commentary Set 1

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Long Essay Question 2

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Question 2: Long Essay Question, Native American Societies and European Colonists

6 points

General Scoring Notes

- Except where otherwise noted, each point of these rubrics is earned independently; for example, a student could earn a point for evidence without earning a point for thesis/claim.
- **Accuracy:** The components of these rubrics require that students demonstrate historically defensible content knowledge. Given the timed nature of the exam, essays may contain errors that do not detract from their overall quality, as long as the historical content used to advance the argument is accurate.
- **Clarity:** Exam essays should be considered first drafts and thus may contain grammatical errors. Those errors will not be counted against a student unless they obscure the successful demonstration of the content knowledge, skills, and practices described below.

Evaluate how Native American societies adapted to the presence of European colonists in North America from 1500 to 1754.

Reporting Category	Scoring Criteria	
Row A Thesis/Claim (0–1 points)	0 points Does not meet the criteria for one point.	1 point Responds to the prompt with a historically defensible thesis/claim that establishes a line of reasoning.
Decision Rules and Scoring Notes		
	Responses that do not earn this point: - Are not historically defensible. - Only restate or rephrase the prompt. - Do not respond to the prompt. - Do not establish a line of reasoning. - Are overgeneralized.	Responses that earn this point: Provide a historically defensible thesis or claim about how Native American societies adapted to the presence of European colonists in North America from 1500 to 1754. The thesis or claim must either provide some indication of the reason for making that claim OR establish categories of the argument.
	Examples that do not earn this point: Provide a restatement of the prompt <i>“Native American societies adapted to the presence of European colonists in North America.”</i> Provide a historically defensible claim, but do not establish a line of reasoning <i>“Native Americans adapted to Europeans in many ways.”</i> Are not historically defensible <i>“Native Americans didn’t adapt to the presence of Europeans.”</i>	Examples that earn this point: Establish a line of reasoning that evaluates the topic of the prompt <i>“While some Native Americans often sought alliances with Europeans to improve their regional power position, others sought alliances with other Native nations to prevent the expansion of European colonies.”</i> Establish a line of reasoning that evaluates the topic of the prompt with analytic categories <i>“Native Americans adapted to Europeans by seeking out some European goods, while also reinforcing some aspects of their traditional culture.”</i> Establish a line of reasoning <i>“The introduction of new diseases forced Native Americans to rebuild their societies.”</i> <i>“Native Americans adapted by trading furs with Europeans.”</i> [Minimally acceptable thesis/claim]
Additional Notes: - The thesis or claim must consist of one or more sentences located in one place, either in the introduction or the conclusion (which may not be limited to the first or last paragraphs). - The thesis or claim must identify a relevant development(s) in the period, although it is not required to encompass the entire period.		

Reporting Category	Scoring Criteria	
Row B Contextualization	0 points Does not meet the criteria for one point.	1 point Describes a broader historical context relevant to the prompt.
(0–1 points)	Decision Rules and Scoring Notes	
	Responses that do not earn this point: - Provide an overgeneralized statement about the time period referenced in the prompt. - Provide context that is not relevant to the prompt. - Provide a passing phrase or reference. Examples that do not earn this point: Do not provide context relevant to the topic of the prompt <i>“Colonists issued the Declaration of Independence because they were sick and tired of taxes.”</i> Provide a passing phrase or reference <i>“There were a wide variety of Native American cultures before the arrival of Europeans.”</i>	Responses that earn this point: - Accurately describe a context relevant to Native American societies and the presence of European colonists in North America from 1500 to 1754. Examples of relevant context that earn this point include the following, if appropriate elaboration is provided: - Native American societies prior to contact with Europeans - Pre-contact trade between Native American nations - European transoceanic ventures - Christopher Columbus - Conflict between Protestants and Catholics in Europe - Native American participation in the American Revolution - Native American relations with the United States government Example of acceptable contextualization: <i>“Many Native American societies had maize-based agriculture, which contributed to trade networks that stretched across the Americas.”</i> <i>“Columbus landed in the Americas in 1492 which led to colonization in Mexico and South America.”</i> [Minimally acceptable contextualization]
	Additional Notes: - The response must describe broader historical events, developments, or processes that occur before, during, or continue after the time frame of the question that are relevant to the topic of the prompt. - To earn this point, the context provided must be more than a phrase or reference.	

Reporting Category	Scoring Criteria		
Row C Evidence (0–2 points)	0 points Does not meet the criteria for one point.	1 point Provides specific examples of at least two pieces of evidence relevant to the topic of the prompt.	2 points Supports an argument in response to the prompt using at least two pieces of specific and relevant evidence.
	Decision Rules and Scoring Notes		
	Responses that do not earn points: - Identify a single piece of evidence. - Provide evidence that is not relevant to the topic of the prompt. - Provide evidence that is outside the time period or region specified in the prompt. - Repeat information that is specified in the prompt. Examples that do not earn points: Provide evidence that is outside the time period or region specified in the prompt <i>“Cahokia was an important Native American city in the Mississippi River region.”</i>	Responses that earn 1 point: - Identify at least two specific historical examples relevant to Native American societies and the presence of European colonists in North America from 1500 to 1754. Examples of evidence that are specific and relevant include the following (two examples required): - Columbian Exchange - Encomienda - Casta system - Powhatan - Pocahontas - Fur trade - Métis people - Native alliances with Europeans [e.g., Haudenosaunee “Covenant Chain” with the British] - Pueblo Revolt / Popé’s Rebellion - Pequot War - Metacom’s [King Philip’s] War - Bartolomé de las Casas - Mission settlements - Imperial wars [King William’s War, Queen Anne’s War, King George’s War] - British colonial regions [New England, middle colonies, southern colonies] Example of a statement that earns one point for evidence: <i>“Partly due to the influence of Catholic figures such as Bartolomé de las Casas, the Spanish monarch passed laws in the mid-1500s to regulate the encomienda and the general treatment of Native Americans.”</i>	Responses that earn 2 points: - Use at least two specific historical examples to support an argument regarding how Native American societies adapted to the presence of European colonists in North America from 1500 to 1754. Examples that successfully support an argument with evidence: <i>“Indigenous people adapted to the presence of Europeans by engaging with them commercially, such as through the fur trade, and forming alliances, such as the Covenant Chain between the Haudenosaunee Confederacy and the British.”</i> [Uses evidence to support an argument about how Indigenous people adapted by engaging in commerce and diplomacy with Europeans] <i>“Mission settlements, such as those in established in New France, saw thousands of Indigenous inhabitants adopting the Christian faith, while other Native groups resisted European incursions through conflicts such as Metacom’s War.”</i> [Uses evidence to support an argument about how Native American societies both accommodated and resisted European colonists] <i>“Native Americans altered their lifestyles in response to the Columbian Exchange through developments such as adopting horses for buffalo hunting and trading traditional foodstuffs, such as corn, beans, and squash, with European colonists for manufactured goods like pots and hatchets.”</i> [Uses evidence to support an argument about how Native Americans altered their lifestyles in response to the Columbian Exchange]

	Additional Notes: • Typically, statements credited as evidence will be more specific than statements credited as contextualization. • If a response has a multipart argument, then it can meet the threshold of two pieces of evidence by giving one example for one part of the argument and another example for a different part of the argument, but the total number of examples must still be at least two.
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Reporting Category	Scoring Criteria		
Row D Analysis and Reasoning Complex Understanding	0 points Does not meet the criteria for one point.	1 point Uses historical reasoning [e.g. comparison, causation, continuity and change] to frame or structure an argument that addresses the prompt.	2 points Demonstrates a complex understanding of the historical development that is the focus of the prompt through sophisticated argumentation and/or effective use of evidence.
(0–2 points)	Decision Rules and Scoring Notes		
	Responses that do not earn points: - May include evidence but offer no reasoning to connect the evidence to an argument. - May assert the use of historical reasoning but does not use it to frame or structure an argument. Examples that do not earn points: Provide evidence but offer no reasoning to connect the evidence to an argument category <i>“British settlers founded Jamestown.”</i>	Responses that earn 1 point: - Must demonstrate the use of historical reasoning to frame or structure an argument about how Native American societies adapted to the presence of European colonists in North America from 1500 to 1754. The reasoning might be uneven or imbalanced, or the evidence may be overly general or lacking specificity. Using a historical reasoning process to frame or structure an argument could include: - Explaining how the treatment of Native Americans by the Spanish and the treatment of Native Americans by the French led to differences in how different Native groups responded to colonization. - Explaining how the introduction of new manufactured goods into North America altered Native American societies and politics. Example of acceptable use of historical reasoning: <i>“Many Native Americans participated as subjects of the Spanish Empire, while in the French Empire most asserted their rights as independent sovereign</i>	Responses that earn 2 points: May demonstrate a complex understanding through sophisticated argumentation that is relevant to the prompt. This may be done in a variety of ways, such as: - Explaining multiple themes or perspectives to explore complexity or nuance; OR - Explaining multiple causes or effects, multiple similarities or differences, or multiple continuities or changes; OR - Explaining both cause and effect, both similarity and difference, or both continuity and change; OR - Explaining relevant and insightful connections within and across periods or geographical areas. These connections should clearly relate to an argument that responds to the prompt. May demonstrate a complex understanding through effective use of evidence relevant to an argument that addresses the prompt. This may be done in a variety of ways that might include: - Explaining how multiple pieces of specific and relevant evidence [at least four] support a nuanced or complex argument that responds to the prompt; OR - Using evidence effectively to demonstrate a sophisticated understanding of different perspectives relevant to the prompt. Demonstrating a complex understanding might include any of the following, if appropriate elaboration is provided: - A response may argue that Native Americans adapted to the European presence by incorporating aspects of European culture into their societies. It then provides multiple pieces of specific and relevant evidence, including the adoption of aspects of Christianity by Native peoples in Mexico and South America, the incorporation of horses into buffalo hunting by Native peoples on the Great Plains, the participation of Native peoples in eastern North America in the fur trade with the Dutch, French, and British, and the incorporation of metal tools and firearms into domestic work and warfare by Native peoples across the Americas. [Explains how at least four pieces of evidence support a nuanced or complex argument]

		<i>allies.”</i> [Indicates a difference between how Native Americans adapted to Spanish colonialism and how they adapted to French colonialism]	• A response may compare the responses of Native American societies to European empires in different regions across North America, arguing that the different social and economic structures of the Aztec people of Mexico, compared to Algonquian peoples of eastern North America, led to differing adaptations to colonization. The more centrally organized Aztec empire was conquered and incorporated into the Spanish empire, while the more decentralized Native American groups of eastern North America remained independent from European colonies and maintained their sovereignty. [Explains relevant connections across geographical areas]
	Additional Notes: • To earn the first point for analysis and reasoning, the response must use historical reasoning to structure a response to the prompt, although the reasoning might be uneven or imbalanced, or the evidence may be overly general or lacking in specificity. • This complex understanding must be part of the argument and may be demonstrated in any part of the response. • While it is not necessary for this complex understanding to be woven throughout the response, it must be more than merely a phrase or reference.		

Native American societies adapted to the presence of European colonists in North America from 1500 to 1754 in varied ways. Before colonialism became as prevalent in North America, during and before the 1500s, Native American populations had diverse and varied cultures, often largely dependant on the surrounding landscape. In 1492, Christopher Columbus' expedition brought forth a wave of European colonialism to the Americas, inextricably linking the two continents. Europeans colonized the Americas for a number of reasons. Some came seeking religious conversion and economic prosperity, others emphasized trade, and still others arrived to escape rigid social heirarchies in Europe during a period of enclosures and increased government centralization. In order to contend with colonial settlers, Native American societies were forced to adapt or see the end of their traditions and cultures through brutal subjugation. During the period from 1500 to 1754, Native American societies adapted to the presence of European colonists by being forced to convert or abandon ancestral lands, uprising militarily wherever possible, and allowing for trade and cultural exchange as they were pushed westward.

Before the evils of colonialism, Native Americans' mode of living was diverse, largely regional, and based on their land. For example, Great Plains societies were often migratory because their land didn't facilitate farming and permanent communities. Mississippi river valley societies often had robust trade networks as a result of their proximity to rivers, and many became trade hubs. Native Americans built a robust culture and in many cases, cities, with one example being Cahokia. They were able to settle in these places because of their good soil, which made the area conducive to agriculture. This led to a wide distribution of diverse Native American populations, often each with their own culture and beliefs.

The year 1500 marks the advent of European colonialism in the Americas, starting off with Spanish colonialism. Spain began to colonize the Americas in 1492, with the expedition of Christopher Columbus, funded by the Spanish monarchy. Their goals can be summed up as "Gold, Glory, and God". They came seeking economic prosperity in the form of gold, silver, and cash crops; the glory of finding new land; and people to convert to Christianity, willingly or unwillingly. Their approach to relations with Native Americans was pure conquest. Native Americans were forced to adapt to a rigid caste system based on racial heirarchies, where they were at the bottom. They also had to contend with spanish forced conversion and the encomienda system, which was essentially slavery. This all ocured during the backdrop of the Columbian exchange, an exchange of goods, people, and diseases as a result of Columbus' expedition. Native Americans traded crops such as tomatos and maize with Spanish settlers, who often responded by enslaving these people and forcing them to grow more. There was also an influx of African slaves in order to replace Native labor. This replacement was necessary because of the final component of the Columbian exchange, disease. Europeans brought a number of diseases, such as smallpox and measles, to which Native Americans had no preexisting immunity. This led to Native Americans dying off in large numbers. It should be noted that some Native Americans adapted by resisting. Because they had a superior lay of the land, many escaped Spanish colonization or fought fiercely to keep their independence. Ultimately, however, most Native Americans in the southern, Spanish occupied regions were forced to adapt by submitting to colonial demands.

After the Spanish found prosperity in the New World, the rest of Europe was soon to follow them to the Americas. The British established a number of colonies beginning in the early 1600s, the first of which was Jamestown. The primary goal of British settlers was economic prosperity, though many also came seeking Christian converts. Rather than work with Native Americans, they typically

forced them to migrate away from colonial lands. This was not true of all colonies, however. One example, Pennsylvania, was founded by William Penn as a place of freedom and prosperity, and much of the land it was on was attained through agreements with Native Americans, rather than by force. Still, the fact remains that the prevailing way Native Americans adapted to British colonialism was by moving away from regions that they occupied. Britain's colonial strategy was characterized by a continuous push westward, which also had the effect of pushing Native Americans away from their ancestral lands. Not all Native Americans went quietly, however. King Metacom's War (also known as King Philip's War) was led by Metacom, who realized that Britain would never cease its territorial aspirations. He led an uprising of Native Americans who fought against British colonization, but the uprising was eventually pushed back with aid from other Native American tribes. This event showcases yet another way that Native Americans adapted to the presence of colonist in varying ways. Some sided with colonists in order to better their own situation, and others rose up against their oppressors in an effort to maintain their culture and sovereignty.

The final way in which Native American societies adapted to the presence of European colonists was by trading and engaging diplomatically with them. This occurred with all colonial groups, but primarily with the French and the Dutch, whose goals were more about facilitating trade than subjugation. French and Dutch colonies tended to be concentrated near rivers in order to take advantage of the robust river trade networks, and their primary goal was the fur trade. In return, they gave Native Americans iron weapons, arms, and cookware developed using European mechanical techniques. These relations tended to be far more mutualistic and Britain and Spain's, and in many cases, mutually beneficial treaties between these groups were created. Sometimes, there were even marriage agreements where French or Dutch merchants would marry Native American woman in order to create stronger ties between the groups. Native Americans adapted to these colonists' presence not only through marriage, but also by engaging in diplomatic relations in order to create mutually beneficial trade.

Native Americans suffered many harms at the hands of colonists in North America from 1500 to 1754. They faced Spain's *encomiendas*, caste systems, and brutal conversions. They also suffered as British westward expansion overtook Native lands and harmed the continuation of their culture. Even their relations with the French and Dutch, while more diplomatically mutualistic, were marred by exploitative practice and coercion. Despite this, Native Americans adapted in a variety of ways. They engaged in diplomacy and trade, and where that failed, they quietly maintained their culture amidst forced conversions. Some rose up against oppressors, and others worked with oppressors for their own benefit. The adaptation of an oppressed people to their oppressors will always be one that is rife with tragedy and mixed response, as they grieve the loss of their culture and land. Despite this, Native Americans showcased their strength and strong sense of culture in their varied methods of adaptation, which carries on even today.

European colonists came to America with the intent in searching for wealth, power, and to spread religion. Spanish conquistadors and French Jesuits sought to convert the natives to Christianity and Catholicism. Christopher Columbus's arrival to North America significantly changed the dynamic of the old world with the new world. Native American societies adapted to the presence of European colonists in North America from 1500 to 1754 by **fighting with them over territory**, and **assimilating to European culture**.

One way Native Americans adapted to European colonists was by fighting with them over territory. In the French and Indian War, also known as the Seven Years War, Native Americans became involved in the conflict between the French and Britain over land. Native American rival groups fought against each other with the French and British in their respective groups with the hope that if they win, the Europeans will give them autonomy to an extent. In other cases, the natives, with weaponry brought by the Europeans from the Columbian Exchange, would fight directly with the British in a war for land and power over the native's territory. This is seen through the King Phillips War, where the natives and the British fought over conflict regarding land. The conflict between the natives and Europeans over land shows that the natives adapted to the Europeans through their interactions and acceptance of the outcomes.

Additionally, some natives adapted to European colonists by assimilating to their culture. Natives such as the Cherokee voluntarily assimilated to European culture and religion. Natives that chose to assimilate often interacted with the European groups, and had more peaceful interactions than ones who didn't. In cases where they so-called assimilated but not voluntarily were through the schools that the Spanish implemented. These schools brought by the Spanish forced the natives to assimilate, but disguised it as being peaceful. They would use aggressive tactics in order to make natives agree with Spanish customs and Christianity. Although it wasn't the most effective, there were a number of natives that assimilated, but it also increased native aggravation towards colonists significantly. This shows that the natives adapted to European culture, whether that be voluntarily or by force.

Native Americans before the 1500's were all across North America. They had settlements with deep rooted culture within thier own tribes and with other tribes. The Native American greatly adapted to the presence of the Europeans by trading with them and conquering new land westward.

The natives knew the land and knew all the reasources very well, better then the newly arrived Europeans. This caused them to be able to make friends with Europeans in some cases. With the Dutch and Europeans they were able to exchange goods, the Natives would show them diffrenrt things on the land while the settlers would introduce new technology such as guns and horses. This greatly allowed the Natives to adapt from what the Europeans thught as childish and underdeveloped to a culture that was more up to date in their eyes. This allowed the Natives to be able to make more treaties and be able to help protect their land better.

One example of this is during the 7 years war when the British fought with them against France to keep their land. This happend once more during Poniacs rebellion, the British crown sided with the natives over the colonist because they set up a treaty with them. This shows that because the natives set up a good foundation with trading and resources they were able to be backed by parliment.

The natives were easily defeted by the settlers when the broke land on the coast. This was due to new technologies they have never seen up untill this point in time when the spainards brough them over and new deasiese, such as smallpox their bodies were not acoustomed to. These defeats forced the natives in South America to move back inward causing them to adapt to new land westward. This also happends in North America mutipul times. Mnay times with the British colonist and wanting to expand thier farms for more soil and they got pushed back from the coast and rivers with an abundance of water they used to irrigate their feild to dryer land with less access to water.

In conclusion, the Europens changed the European culture completly. The natives learned how to use techologies they didn't have making it easier for them for them to farm and hunt with the introduction of horses. They also adpted by conquering westward land from other tribes and being able to survive on a completly different terain then they are used too.

Long Essay Question 2

Note: Student samples are quoted verbatim and may contain spelling and grammatical errors.

Overview

NEW for 2025: The question overviews can be found in the *Chief Reader Report on Student Responses* on [AP Central](#).

Sample: 2A

Thesis Score: 1

Contextualization Score: 1

Evidence Score: 2

Analysis and Reasoning Score: 2

Total Score: 6

A. Thesis/Claim (0–1 points): 1

The response earned 1 point for thesis because it provides a historically defensible claim that establishes a reasoning in the sentence of the first paragraph, stating “Native American societies adapted to the presence of European colonists by being forced to convert or abandon ancestral lands, uprising militarily whenever possible, and allowing for trade and cultural exchange as they were pushed westward.”

B. Contextualization (0–1 points): 1

The response earned 1 point for contextualization. In the first paragraph, the response describes extensive historical context, including Native American life before European contact, European reasons for exploration and expansion, and changes to life in Europe that encouraged colonialism overseas.

C. Evidence (0–2 points): 2

The response earned 1 point for identifying at least two specific historical examples relevant to the prompt. The response includes a large amount of creditable evidence, including the Spanish caste system, forced conversions to Christianity, the encomienda system, the Columbian Exchange and relevant crops, European diseases such as smallpox, and Metacom’s War. Although some evidence referenced, such as the city of Cahokia, is outside the specified period, there is sufficient evidence in other parts of the essay for the first point.

The response earned 1 point for using at least two specific historical examples to support an argument in response to the prompt. The response supports the claim that some Native Americans’ adaptation to European colonization varied with evidence of Metacom’s War and the role of some Native American allies of the English in Metacom’s defeat. In addition, the response uses William Penn’s agreements with Native American nations as evidence of Native accommodation of colonial expansion instead of conflict.

Long Essay Question 2 (continued)**D. Analysis and Reasoning (0–2 points): 2**

The response earned 1 point for using historical reasoning (causation) to frame an argument that addresses the prompt. In the second paragraph, the response analyzes the ways in which Spanish policies forced changes to Native societies: “[Spanish] relations with Native Americans was pure conquest. Native Americans were forced to adapt to a rigid caste system based on racial hierarchies, where they were at the bottom. They also had to contend with Spanish forced conversion and the encomienda system, which was essentially slavery.”

The response earned 1 point for demonstrating a complex understanding by explaining multiple ways in which Native Americans reacted to European presence in North America across geographical areas. The response discusses the incorporation of Native Americans in Spanish American colonial society, the mix of resistance against and accommodation of colonization in British America, and the commercial and diplomatic relationships that Native Americans forged with the French and Dutch.

Sample: 2B**Thesis Score: 1****Contextualization Score: 1****Evidence Score: 1****Analysis and Reasoning Score: 1****Total Score: 4****A. Thesis/Claim (0–1 points): 1**

The response earned 1 point because it provides a historically defensible claim that establishes a reasoning in the final sentence of the first paragraph, stating “Native american societies adapted to the presence of european colonists in north america from 1500 to 1754 by **fighting with them over territory**, and **assimilating to european culture**.”

B. Contextualization (0–1 points): 1

The response earned 1 point for contextualizing the time period by providing the reasons for European exploration and contact with Native Americans in the opening sentences of the response.

C. Evidence (0–2 points): 1

The response earned 1 point for evidence. The response earns the first point for describing several examples of evidence such as the Columbian Exchange, King Philip’s War, and the French and Indian War, but does not effectively use them to support an argument. The response’s discussion of the Cherokee Nation is outside the time period of the prompt.

Long Essay Question 2 (continued)**D. Analysis and Reasoning (0–2 points): 1**

The response earned 1 point for analysis and reasoning. The response is structured around the argument that Native Americans adapted to changes by beginning conflicts and by assimilating.

The response does not earn the point for complex understanding. While the response attempts to discuss multiple changes, it does not effectively support that claim with relevant and historically accurate evidence.

Sample: 2C**Thesis Score: 1****Contextualization Score: 0****Evidence Score: 0****Analysis and Reasoning Score: 1****Total Score: 2****A. Thesis/Claim (0–1 points): 1**

The response earned 1 point for a historically defensible thesis that establishes a line of reasoning in the final sentence of the first paragraph: “The Native American greatly adapted to the presence of the Europeans by trading with them and conquering new land westward.”

B. Contextualization (0–1 points): 0

The response does not earn a point for contextualization, despite an attempt to do so in the first paragraph. However, the two sentences are too vague and overgeneralized.

C. Evidence (0–2 points): 0

The response does not earn any points for use of evidence, despite numerous attempts to do so. The examples given are inaccurate, outside the time period of the question, or insufficiently described.

D. Analysis and Reasoning (0–2 points): 1

The response earns 1 point for analysis by using the historical skill of causation, arguing that smallpox introduced by the Spanish was “causing them to adapt to new land westward” in the fourth paragraph. While that text refers to South America, the response clarifies in the next sentence that a similar effect happened in North America as well, arguing that contact with the British resulted in Native Americans getting “pushed back from the coast and rivers.”

The response did not earn the point for demonstrating a complex understanding because it makes no attempt at sophisticated argumentation or effective use of evidence.